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ABSTRACT

This report records tasks completed during the last 3 years by the Commonwealth of Learning, which has promoted, supported, advanced, and enriched the practice of distance and open learning Commonwealth-wide since 1989. It begins with two messages: "There Will Have To Be Another Way" (H. Ian Macdonald) and "Achieving Goals, Working Together" (Gajaraj Dhanarajan). A section highlights programs that addressed basic, vocational, and nonformal education; used information and communications technologies; focused on gender and development; provided academic and professional services, including training and creating opportunities for youth; adapted learning materials and resources; provided information and support; and advocated use of distance and open learning. Other sections address collaborative course offerings; alliances and partnerships; governance and management; responding regionally; and support from and for governments. The report includes one-page descriptions of these special projects: virtual learning; the suitcase station, which is a portable radio project; Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Program; the Media Empowerment program that uses digital technology to produce farm instructional videos; Commonwealth Educational Media Center for Asia; and Literacy Project. Appended are lists of publications, Board of Governors, and senior staff; and summary financial information. (YLB)

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COL

THE COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

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Access to education means access to a better future

"Recognising knowledge as key to cultural, social and economic development, The Commonwealth of Learning is committed to assisting Commonwealth member governments to take full advantage of open, distance and technology-mediated learning strategies to provide increased and equitable access to education and training for all their citizens."

– COL Mission Statement

There will have to be another way

Message from the Chairman

While my own background and experience was in the conventional form of university education, I have been an enthusiastic supporter of open and distance learning since 1982 when I had the privilege of meeting the late Hon. Indira Gandhi, who was Prime Minister of India at the time. Mrs. Gandhi remarked that India's educational policy objective was to have every child with access to basic education by the year 1995. Sadly, she lamented, that would require the addition of 10 million school places a year between 1982 and 1995 ... and I thought: there will have to be another way.

Traditional arguments against open and distance learning have faded away over the last decade. An increasing number of studies reveal that such education can be of comparable – even higher – quality than conventional means, and certainly provided to larger numbers at substantially lower costs. The advances in information and communications technology have also improved research and learning methods throughout the world. The ability to provide virtual libraries with stocks of currently unaffordable journals and reference books for effective teaching and research will soon be a reality throughout the developing world.

We must, however, ensure that increasing use of educational technology does not encourage a paternal as opposed to a partnership approach between individuals, institutions and nations. I can assure you that The Commonwealth of Learning, in employing open learning and distance education as a means of ensuring greater opportunities and greater equality, operates from the principle that we will all learn from one another in the process. In that sense, we are a catalyst rather than a missionary, dedicated to capacity-building in the developing world in order to meet each community's social goals.

In this *Summary Report*, we are pleased to highlight several recent programme accomplishments in the areas of staff development, training, policy formulation, collaborative materials development, technology applications, knowledge sharing and research.

With support from, and participation by, member governments of the Commonwealth, COL has accomplished a great deal over the past few years. You will see in the pages that follow that this small organisation, with limited funds, has developed an impressive record of achievement through its great capacity to network and leverage its resources

On behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Governors, I offer my congratulations to COL's staff and associates throughout the Commonwealth on the continuing progress that is being made and their dedication to human resource development.

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C.
Chairman, Board of Governors, The Commonwealth of Learning
President Emeritus, York University (Canada)

Achieving goals, working together

Message from the President

The Commonwealth of Learning celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1999. It was an occasion not only to reflect on the achievements of the agency in a period so short as a decade, but also to measure its contribution to the development and growth of open and distance education throughout the Commonwealth during that period. The agency can take rightful pride in the role it has played in adding value to, and being a catalyst for, either the establishment or orderly growth of the Commonwealth's great open and distance learning universities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, as well as other dual-mode institutions located in the Caribbean, the South Pacific, and South and Southeast Asia. COL has also been instrumental in building and maintaining close ties among these institutions and individuals through its quiet interventions. All of this prompted at least one speaker at the tenth anniversary celebratory conference in the Royal Kingdom of Brunei to remark, "if COL wasn't there we would have to invent it." The last three years of our first decade is captured in this report, which COL is pleased to submit for your information.

This report records the completion of tasks we undertook to perform on behalf of the Commonwealth three years ago in Botswana. In 1997, at their 13th triennial meeting, COL requested and received permission from Honourable Ministers of Education of the Commonwealth to implement in partnership with their own institutions activities that would enhance indigenous capabilities, knowledge, skills and expertise to undertake, design, implement and improve distance and open learning activities. We also undertook to investigate and advise member states of developments in the application of learning technologies as well as create fora to share and exchange knowledge amongst Commonwealth educators. In all, we completed some 150 individual projects, both small and large, of which some were funded by COL's own resources and others through collaboration with national and international agencies. Highlights of our work during the 1997 – 2000 plan period include:

- Collaborating with, and co-ordinating the efforts of, eight southern African countries to train teachers of lower/junior secondary science, mathematics and technology subjects using distance education
- Installing portable community broadcasting stations and digital video production systems
- Encouraging the development of open schooling systems, the application of new technologies in agricultural extension and co-ordinated skills training programmes
- Working with four donor agencies and ten recipient medical schools around the Commonwealth, offering a training programme for young surgeons by distance education.
- Carrying out an innovative five-year pilot programme, on behalf of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which provides undergraduate scholarships for Caribbean students to study "at a distance" through Canadian post-secondary institutions
- Becoming an implementation partner in Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's Youth International Internship Program
- Engaging community learning centres and communications technologies to support adult literacy development programmes in selected Commonwealth countries, with funding from the British Department for International Development (DFID)
- Researching current trends in the "virtual" delivery of higher education, also with DFID funding
- Organising the first *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning* in March 1999 in Brunei Darussalam, in celebration of COL's tenth anniversary
- Publishing a manual on *The Facilitation of the Transfer of Learning Materials* and producing "Training toolkits", designed to provide comprehensive manuals for training distance educators
- In association with Taylor & Francis/Routledge, launching an annual *World review of distance education and open learning*
- Continuing efforts to ensure gender-balanced programmes and projects, as well as initiatives to redress imbalances in access to education and training where these are identified, including conducting regional research on barriers to accessing technology for women and co-ordinating the development of a gender training resources database

We also took measures to better ensure COL's sustainability through partnerships and such means as fee-for-service arrangements and seeking additional sources of revenue beyond member Governments' support (COL International). In all, some CDN$29 million was expended on these activities. Of this member states contributed $13 million as direct funding to our core budget and the remaining came as either in kind or project contributions. On behalf of COL, I wish to record our sincere gratitude to all of our contributors without whose support our work and accomplishments could not have been possible. Through our work with the support of Commonwealth Governments we kept the promise we made in 1997.

As we enter the third millennium, education and training becomes even more critical to the well being of the Commonwealth and its people. The Commonwealth of Learning is poised to fulfil its role in support of the achievement of the Commonwealth goal of bringing *education for all* to its peoples.

Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan
President & Chief Executive Officer, The Commonwealth of Learning
Professor Emeritus, The Open University, Hong Kong

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Introduction

THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING (COL) promotes, supports, advances and enriches the practice of distance and open learning Commonwealth-wide. It continues to achieve this through advocacy, advisories, training, providing information, strengthening institutions, model building, consultation, conferences, professional development, policy support, partnership brokering and networking.

Since it began operations in 1989, COL's influence and impact has helped shift the practice of open and distance learning from the periphery of educational delivery to the centre. More importantly, COL has helped Commonwealth governments and international agencies appreciate the value of distance, open and technology-mediated learning, and to incorporate the methods into basic education, open schooling, teacher training, technical/vocational education and training, continuing professional education, literacy and values education, as well as into the tertiary sector and non-formal situations.

COL has delivered over 600 projects, valued at about $45 million, on the Commonwealth's behalf. These projects have influenced the creation or enhanced the capacity of open universities in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, as well as the Universities of the West Indies and South Pacific. COL has also assisted staff development, training, policy formulation, collaborative materials development, technology applications, research, knowledge sharing and the implementation of student support systems.

Becoming the centre of a Commonwealth-wide network of open learning knowledge and skills, COL has trained some 1,200 individuals and employed around 400 short-term consultants from 39 Commonwealth countries.

COL has been able to achieve so much, with relatively little in financial resources, because it successfully taps into the Commonwealth's rich pool of talent in order to help the Commonwealth help itself – which is precisely what a Commonwealth agency should do.

Three-year Plan for 1997 – 2000

Commonwealth Ministers of Education, meeting in Botswana in 1997, warmly endorsed and made pledges of support for COL's Three-year Plan for 1997 – 2000. Almost all of the goals that were set have been achieved. COL completed over 150 projects in total, with 78% of the core-funding target realised and cash and in-kind contributions totalling CDN$29.9 million.

The Plan outlined 180 projects of varying sizes for implementation throughout the Com-

continued

The Plan outlined 180 projects of varying sizes for implementation throughout the Commonwealth, defined in ways that reflected the current state of open and distance learning in each of nine regions. Programmes for girls and women, good governance and teacher training figured prominently.

Some projects, however, were not completed as originally envisioned. One such task was an attempt at establishing a Commonwealth-wide academic credit bank to facilitate student mobility. Invited expert comment on the proposal clarified that the project's scope, and particularly its anticipated time frame, were overly ambitious. COL subsequently refined the project to accord with a consultant's recommendation for a regional pilot, in the first instance, of a plan for credit articulation and banking. In March 2000, Education Ministers of Pacific island nations adopted a proposal to establish systematic provision for credit articulation and banking as integral to a collaborative technical and vocational training scheme.

Several initiatives not originally in the Plan were also launched to respond to immediate needs and/or the availability of partnerships and dedicated funding.

Programme highlights

Addressing basic, vocational and non-formal education

Basic education and open schooling

COL is encouraging the development of open schooling systems. In collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF and local institutions, COL convened regional workshops in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean during 1996–1999 on developing improved open schooling frameworks to increase access to basic education for girls and women. In 2000, COL convened a regional conference to explore open schooling methodologies and other innovative models for educating street children. The symposium, held in Mussoorie, India, was organised by India's National Open School. Also in 2000, COL agreed to fund a feasibility study in Jamaica, conducted by SchoolNet India Limited, on the establishment of an open schooling system for that country.

In Southern Africa, COL is co-ordinating a materials development and training initiative to provide a suite of high-quality, junior secondary core curriculum learning materials common to the nine countries involved.

COL was one of the financial supporters for the publication by the Commonwealth Secretariat of two resource booklets on human rights and citizenship for use by secondary teachers in Commonwealth countries.

The British Department for International Development (DFID) is funding a five-year project to write and deliver secondary education materials for out-of-school youth in five designated areas within Nampula province, Mozambique. Some of the sites are very remote and few currently have infrastructure such as electricity or a reliable telephone connection. The challenges lie in finding appropriate technology for course delivery, as well as in ensuring necessary student support. The project was jointly developed by COL and Mozambique's Ministry of Education. Current statistics show two million students enrolled in primary schools, with only 80,000 in years 8–12. Limited classroom space precludes meeting the enormous demand for secondary enrolment through conventional means.

Teacher education

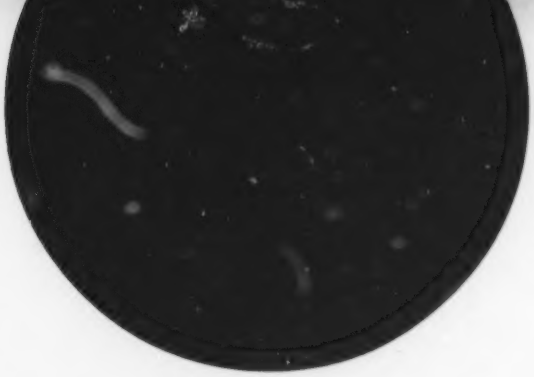
Teacher education is integral to a focus on improving basic education. COL is working with eight Southern African countries to upgrade teachers of upper primary and junior secondary science, mathematics, technology and general studies using distance education. HIV/AIDS concerns increase the urgency of this challenge.

In Tonga, COL worked with the Ministry of Education's Community Development and Training Centre to develop a training programme for upgrading teachers from a certificate to a diploma level. The pilot is now underway.

In conjunction with Domasi College and the Malawi Ministry of Education, COL developed first-year materials to professionally upgrade 3,500 teachers currently teaching without the requisite training.

COL and Namibia's Ministry of Basic Education and Culture completed a feasibility study in 2000 on electronically networking Teacher Resource Centres across the country to deliver online teacher training courses.

Additionally, COL has laid the groundwork for a pan-African policy dialogue on in-service teacher training by open and distance learning that will be hosted by Namibia in July 2001.



Agricultural extension

Through pilot studies and projects, COL has made a modest beginning in the use of information and communication technologies, including video, to enhance agricultural learning in the Commonwealth. A thorough review of existing literature, sharing of experience and exchange of views are needed. COL has convened regional consultations in Barbados and India for this purpose.

COL also collaborates with international and national agricultural research institutions, extension partners and non-governmental organisations. Working with the Bangladesh Open University, it is developing a pilot programme to increase and encourage business and self-employment skills among rural women. It has also launched an initial project to develop an agricultural training programme for rural youth in India, focussing on good practices in vegetable and fruit seedling production.

Technical/vocational education and training

COL is collaborating with several international agencies on skills development programmes, instructor training and networks.

With partners in the Caribbean, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Bangladesh, the drafting of the Technical and Vocational Teacher Training Programme was completed in 1999. The programme is being implemented in the Caribbean region with all member countries participating and The University of Technology, Jamaica acting as the co-ordinating institution. The programme supports a rapidly expanding technical/vocational education system, which resulted in the employment of technically competent staff that lacked teaching skills. The programme can also be used elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

In the Pacific, COL is working with member states on two regional projects. One will improve skills training, in key areas of economic expansion, by developing learning materials for use throughout the region. The second will focus on developing policies and procedures to facilitate credit transfer across institutional, national and even regional boundaries. Particularly for those in small island states, acquiring a suite of accredited skills will become easier; this then enables them to contribute to the national economy through employment.

Literacy

With funding from the British Department for International Development, COL is engaging community learning centres and communications technologies to support adult literacy development programmes in selected Commonwealth countries – initially, India and Zambia. The project is also evaluating the effectiveness of such support to literacy workers who provide training programmes in reading, numeracy and in the use and operation of information and communication tools. Work began in 1998, with implementation beginning in 2000. The Indira Gandhi National Open University and the University of Zambia are the project's local partners.

Using information and communications technologies

COL provides advice and conducts regional workshops on the application of appropriate technologies in open and distance learning, non-formal education and development communications.

TEL-isphere 99, The Caribbean and Technology-Enhanced Learning was held in Barbados in November 1999. The regional conference was organised by COL and The Caribbean Broadcasting Union, with financial support from the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank's *Info*Dev programme and the British Department for International Development. The event was hosted by the Barbados Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre and the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions. Leading educators and technology professionals met to identify technological methods for enhancing and extending education and training in the Caribbean. They also discussed the findings of the *Use of Public Broadcasting in the Caribbean for Open/Distance Learning*, a feasibility study commissioned by COL with funding assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank.

The Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), established by COL and hosted by the Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, manages a database of over 10,000 educational radio and television programmes that are available for use by institutions and broadcasters throughout the Asian region. Contributions are from 150 organisations in six countries, covering 65 subjects in ten languages. CEMCA also regularly conducts media training workshops in the region.

COL has installed and provided training on digital video production systems in Jamaica and in Ghana, concentrating on their use for agricultural extension, and has conducted feasibility studies for similar application in Dominica, Grenada and Tobago. Low-cost, portable briefcase-sized community broadcasting stations have been set up, most recently in South Africa and Zambia, as well as a solar-powered broadcast installation in Uganda. The stations provide a wide range of educational and informational services to meet local needs.

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The Commonwealth Electronic Network for Schools and Education (CENSE), initiated by COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and COMNET-IT, facilitates Commonwealth-wide contact between national learning grids, schools and institutions. COL hosts the CENSE web site (*www.col.org/cense*), which provides support to teachers, learners and education administrators and promotes awareness and practice of local cultures. As "school nets" evolve and grow throughout the Commonwealth, the site will capture successes and challenges in information technology development, lessons learned and directions taken. Links to other existing school nets and resources are also provided.

COL has contributed educational technology expertise to several institutions and at many symposiums; it also publishes *EdTech News*, which provides snap-shots of current educational technology practice and developments.

Focussing on gender and development

Achieving equitable access to quality education and training features prominently on COL's agenda.

As a part of its report to the Sixth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs in New Delhi in April 2000, COL was invited to demonstrate how Ministers could engage the agency to address challenges, such as lack of educational and economic opportunities and human rights contraventions, that continue to face girls and women in many parts of the Commonwealth. Examples of innovative formal and non-formal distance education delivery presented by COL included adapting human rights education materials for use by teachers and educators, working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to educate street children, using radio broadcasts to train women agricultural workers in remote villages and developing models for educating AIDS orphans and their support workers.

By making learning available at times and places suitable to a student's particular needs, distance education can help overcome many obstacles faced by girls and women. Distance learning methodologies incorporating relevant and effective self-instructional materials offer powerful means to address the critical and emerging gender-related issues of single-parent households, "male marginalisation" in the Caribbean and health concerns such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic at both the policy level and in public education programmes.

In the province of Kwa Zulu Natal, in the Republic of South Africa, COL collaborated with the provincial Department of Education and Culture in developing an open and distance learning training programme for women in educational management. Once fully developed, the South African Association of Women Managers in Education will expand the programme into several other provinces.

Help from COL is also enabling the Women's International Network (WIN) to publish a book on how women can use technologies for open and distance learning. With a long, impressive list of international authors, the book is expected to make a significant contribution to existing literature.

Gender barriers to ICTs

Three in a series of four COL-convened regional expert group meetings to identify gender-based barriers to information and communications technologies were held during 1998 – 2000. Symposiums have been held in India, Barbados and Tanzania. Funding assistance for the Asian meeting was provided by the British Council, and for the African meeting, by Canada's International Development Research Centre through its Acacia Initiative. A final report and recommendations for action will be prepared once the Pacific meeting is held.

Prior to organising the meetings, COL conducted an environmental scan of available literature and other information on the barriers to new information and communications technologies encountered by women. The scan helped identify regional issues.

Gender training resources

COL, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), with COL as the implementing agency, developed a prototype database of training resources and capacity building materials for gender mainstreaming. At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), gender mainstreaming was identified as a priority for governments and other bodies. The concept includes promoting the role of women in the field of development and integrating women's values into development work.

The gender training resources database is endorsed by the United Nations Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and currently includes materials from the United Nations and Commonwealth systems. The database was demonstrated at the

Virtual learning: virtually here?

VIRTUAL EDUCATION IS HOT. It's even trendy. But beyond the hype, what exactly is it? The truth in this case may not be out there, but within the electronic pages of a study published in June, 1999 by The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and sponsored by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) in London.

The Development of Virtual Education: A global perspective (*www.col.org/virtualed*) tries to go where no one has gone before in creating an authoritative, global study of virtual education through a series of expert-authored regional papers. The impetus was a need for the Commonwealth at large to be updated on the educational use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and for subsequent change to educational structures. All regional reports were in by February 1999 and the study team members met in March 1999 at COL's *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning* in Brunei Darussalam to review their efforts and to identify a global perspective.

A virtual education institution is defined in the report as an organisation that, directly or indirectly, uses ICTs to provide educational services; this includes traditional agencies such as universities, or non-educational organisations that distribute virtual educational services. Not many agencies to date are fully virtual from administration to instruction, but there is a global trend to expand virtual services in educational institutions as well as in the corporate sector.

Pedagogical concerns exist, such as the absence of human interaction, and there are legal considerations, such as copyright infringement. But the consensus is that virtual learning is a solid direction that education is taking, not a fad. It is profoundly affecting access to education; online distance learning is less onerous than a correspondence course. It has affected the way people learn; community tele-learning centres, which provide access to ICTs, are how some countries cope with technological disparities.

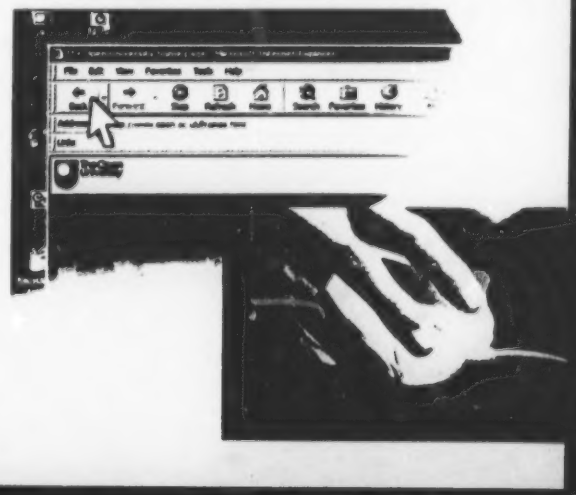
The most important factors driving virtual learning are increasingly affordable ICTs, such as personal computers and Internet access, and their ability to provide flexible, niche learning to a lifelong learners' market hungry for educational opportunities. However, the development of ICT infrastructure needs to be more closely linked with educational considerations; a critical "haves" and "have nots" access to learning is developing in some parts of the world.

A crucial proposal is for ICT development planning to take educational access into consideration. Legislative incentives can be introduced to guarantee a portion of telecommunication capacity for educational purposes. Traditional institutions need to start thinking "out of the box" to be fully effective in the virtual marketplace; for example, offering courses online but insisting on "hard copy" communication may be counter-productive.

Feedback from the report, which is also available in limited quantities in print, has been very positive: "Excellent work... The report has raised very interesting and important issues that need to be considered when looking at creating virtual education," commented Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education for South Africa, in a letter to COL dated 15 November 1999.

COL is planning a follow-up study, on trends identified in the initial report. Also, through its Information Resource Centre (*www.col.org/irc*) and a recent Knowledge Management Roundtable (*www.col.org/KMR*), COL is identifying ways to consolidate its role as a catalyst for open and distance learning.

Get ready to expand your mental frontiers; virtual learning is a mouse click away, on a PC near you!



The report tries to go where no one has gone before in creating an authoritative study of virtual education.

UN's General Assembly Special Session on "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century" ("Beijing +5"), in June in New York, and consultation on further development and participation was held with those attending the session.

Academic and professional services – Training and creating opportunities for youth

In 1998, COL launched an internship programme to enhance the professional growth of distance educators from developing Commonwealth countries through exchanges, attachments and the sharing of experiences. With financial assistance from COL, opportunities are available for both early and mid-career practitioners, while retired professionals can volunteer expertise and technical advice. In 2000, Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade selected COL as an implementation partner in its Youth International Internship Program. As a part of Canada's *Youth Employment Strategy*, the funds are provided for eight young Canadians to gain international experience and skills through working on COL projects.

COL collaborated with The Commonwealth Youth Programme on designing a distance education programme, in support of the Commonwealth Secretariat's *Commonwealth Certificate in Youth in Development Work*. It has been implemented throughout South and Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Comprehensive manuals for use in training distance educators were completed during 1999/2000. The Training "toolkits", covering several topic areas, were produced in collaboration with the International Extension College (UK) and were partially funded by the Asian Development Bank's *Training for Capacity Building in Distance Education for Primary Teacher Training* programme.

COL, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service, in consultation with government agencies and experts throughout the Commonwealth, are developing guidelines for evaluating the validity and appropriateness of franchised or overseas educational provision.

COL has developed, with funding from the British Department for International Development (DFID), a proposal for a Commonwealth academic credit bank. Following a recommendation from COL's Board of Governors, the concept will be piloted in the Pacific region to further assess feasibility and value.

DFID also provided funding for COL to research current trends in "virtual" delivery of higher education. Compiled with input from an international expert group, the study identified the state of practice and recommended future directions for COL. The study was completed in 1999 and is published on COL's web site (*www.col.org/virtualed*).

Adapting learning materials and resources

COL has supported activities to provide information about, and facilitate access to, affordable, high-quality open and distance learning materials and resources.

COL is collaborating with the Commonwealth Secretariat on a programme to adapt existing course materials for training laboratory technicians. Workshops were held in Asia, the Pacific and Africa (the latter in collaboration with the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa) to modify the materials for use by local institutions. The Open University of Sri Lanka, Kenya Polytechnic and Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo have begun offering programmes based on the materials.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Hamilton Bailey Memorial Trust, Pan African Association of Surgeons, the British Council, COL and ten recipient medical schools around the Commonwealth are collaborating to offer a distance education training programme for young surgeons, based on materials donated by the Royal College of Surgeons. COL commissioned the development of a supplementary module on surgery under tropical conditions.

In 1998, in partnership with the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC) and UNESCO, COL commissioned a survey of teacher education materials and programmes in the Commonwealth Caribbean on behalf of the region's Chief Education Officers.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

Following extensive international consultation, COL published a manual on *The Facilitation of the Transfer of Learning Materials* in 1999. It provides practical advice to producers and users in selling, transferring, purchasing and acquiring materials. The manual is designed to facilitate inter-institutional negotiation processes and to identify the roles that COL may play in specific transfer and accreditation situations. Issues addressed include types of transfer arrangements, copyright and intellectual property, adaptation and translation, costs, pricing, remuneration, quality and accreditation.

continued...

The suitcase station: have radio, will travel

A FEW DIAL SETTINGS off the international trawl of powerful, wide-ranging signals from regional and national FM radio networks lies the buzzing transmission of community radio stations. Now zero in on a subset of sounds from central Africa. Closer still and you'll hear the community radio of Apac in northern Uganda, broadcasting in the Luo language, and... from a radio station that fits in an airplane carry-on suitcase.

This compact package has earphones, a microphone, a mixer, two tape players and recorders, two CD players and a transmitter, as well as a hook-up to commercial FM networks and to satellite feeds for off-air programming. It broadcasts up to a 50 km radius, runs on a car battery and can be modified for solar power. The commercially available components are common worldwide, which also means the radio station is relatively easy to operate. All for around US$3,500, which is a fraction of the cost that is normally associated with radio broadcasting.

The portable station's curriculum vitae since 1996 includes installation at eight locations worldwide, under the stewardship of The Commonwealth of Learning. COL's objective in this is to foster local participation, training and education in less advantaged communities, often in remote locations. Local personnel are trained in basic broadcast techniques and administration; broadcasts use the local language and the programming emphasises community interests and needs.

The portable radio project is an initiative of the Commonwealth of Learning Media Empowerment (COLME) programme, COL's framework for creative technology and media project development. Under COL's mandate to develop and share open learning and distance education resources and technologies, COLME builds on ideas submitted by in-country agencies and comes up with a technologically viable, cost-effective, sustainable model. The main administrators are the submitting agencies themselves, with support from COL where needed.

The first COL-tested portable stations were at Upper Laird in the Yukon, Canada, and in Port Antonio, Jamaica. Since then the suitcases have found their way to Belize, Guyana, Namibia, Uganda and Zambia, and two installations in South Africa.

Engineered for adaptability, the suitcase stations now in use are designed and manufactured by Wantok Enterprises Inc. based in Manitoba, Canada. Radio broadcast is basic communication technology but requires certain conditions for sustainability, such as widespread radio accessibility and terrain conducive to signal transmission.

Solutions are implemented individually; in Apac electrical power is intermittent, so the portable station and facilities were converted completely to solar energy. A second transmitter was implemented 50 kilometers away from the main Apac station to rebroadcast the Apac FM station signal to an even wider area. The unit's design has an interface for telephone calls and extra microphone inputs for group discussions, in response to ongoing case studies and listener feedback.

Other challenges, such as accommodating restrictive government controls, continue – but the prognosis for the portable radio station is positive: small is beautiful, and is here to stay.

It fits in an airplane carry-on suitcase, broadcasts up to a 50 km radius, runs on a car bat... can be modified for solar power.

In 2000, COL published a toolkit of resources for use by trainers when addressing copyright issues in developing distance education materials. The entire toolkit is available online at the COL web site (*www.col.org*) for non-commercial use.

Providing information and support

COL provides information on open and distance education through special collections, Internet applications and regular publications. Its World Wide Web site (*www.col.org*) is expanding rapidly, and now profiles several hundred documents and external links. COL has facilitated "virtual conferences" for both public discussion and project administration, and is also helping to improve networking within groups such as school administrators and people involved in technical/vocational education and training programming. The Information Resource Centre, accessed through the World Wide Web, became fully online in 1998 and responds to increasing requests for information and documents. COL's quarterly newsletters, *Connections* and *EdTech News*, give 8,000 government officials and education leaders information on COL's work as well as other developments worldwide. COL also issues regular electronic bulletins.

Responding to requests from several governments and agencies, COL provides services to help develop educational policy and practice. It has co-ordinated and supported several national policy discussions, most recently in Ghana, Mozambique and Swaziland.

A consortium led by COL, including the International Extension College (IEC, U.K.), the University of Namibia and local consultants, conducted an African Development Bank-funded feasibility study for the Government of Mozambique on implementing a fully integrated national open and distance learning system.

COL staff consultants were commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO) to conduct a feasibility study on developing a technology-based distance learning strategy for WHO staff and clients worldwide. COL was also contracted by LEAD International to help develop training material for use by its "Associates" located throughout the world.

COL advocates and supports the development of open and distance learning professional associations across the Commonwealth and has helped create national and regional forums promoting distance education. It currently works with 14 national and regional associations and is facilitating the establishment of a Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations (FOCODLA), to provide a structure for on-going pan-Commonwealth collaboration among distance education professionals.

In association with Taylor & Francis/Routledge, COL has launched the *World review of distance education and open learning* series. The first title in the series, *Higher Education through Open and Distance Learning*, was published in March 1999; the second, *Basic Education at a Distance*, will be launched in November 2000. A third volume, *Policy for open and distance learning*, is slated for 2001.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

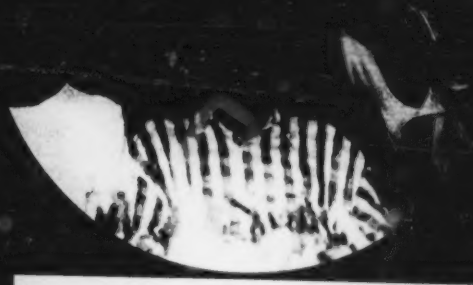
Knowledge management has tremendous potential for enhancing the quality of education and training for all citizens of the Commonwealth. It can have a significant impact on the need for mass education, access and equity, cost-effectiveness and efficient systems of delivery of instruction.

In October 1999, experts in developing and managing distance education libraries and information databases met at COL's headquarters to discuss the changing nature of knowledge management. They examined how COL, through its Information Resource Centre, could best meet the needs of its Commonwealth stakeholders through capitalising on opportunities afforded by newer technologies.

Among several action items, the group drafted a mission statement for a new COL initiative:

> *The [proposed] Commonwealth Open Learning Interactive Network for Knowledge Sharing (COLINKS) is committed to taking forward the information/knowledge provisions of COL's mission with a view to increasing the opportunities for rapid access to knowledge through the fostering of co-operative and collaborative alliances of knowledge management organisations (including libraries, database providers and specialist centres) using appropriate and emerging information communications technologies across the Commonwealth.*

As co-ordinator of the proposed network, COL would host its web site, help identify material for inclusion and provide advice, assistance and training for contributing partners. As a major component in developing its three-year plan, COL is now formulating staffing and resource arrangements to further develop COLINKS and to facilitate network partner participation.



Caribbean scholarship students use Internet classrooms

TRADITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE distance education is a clunky animal. Paper passes back and forth in the mail. You study in isolation. Your work is examined by an instructor you never see, and seldom contact directly. The process works; the achievement is real. But if you can imagine another, perhaps better way, the alternative now cresting the distance learning wave is the Internet.

It's true that the information superhighway is cluttered with information junk. The Internet's full potential remains unrealised, and is accessible worldwide to a relative few. But amidst the scramble of high tech start-ups, some educators have caught on: the Internet is a valuable tool for long distance education, and in a programme initiated in the Caribbean by The Commonwealth of Learning, some of its vast potential is beginning to be tapped.

The Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) is an extension of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). Forty years old, the CSFP is a co-operative education success story that remains focused on providing post-graduate study through traditional means, and regardless of a subject's relevance to the economic climate. Recent cuts to CSFP funding underscore the need for cost-effective, progressive modifications to its approach. The five-year pilot CCDESP, initiated in 1998, brings the CSFP up to speed for the new Millennium; it emphasises undergraduate-level lifelong learning and skills upgrading, and uses new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to conduct long distance learning.

The CCDESP, a programme of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), is being piloted by COL. COL's venture partners are three leading distance and open learning Canadian universities, The University of the West Indies (UWI) and four Caribbean governments. The Canadian universities have designed the curriculums and offer them through participating countries, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education, local partners, and UWI's network of facilities. Scholarship recipients are selected primarily by the host governments.

The programme addresses skills shortages in a regional job market with high unemployment levels. Athabasca University provides information technology programmes in Jamaica, Memorial University of Newfoundland offers teacher education in Dominica and in St. Vincent & the Grenadines, and Mount Saint Vincent University proffers tourism management in St. Lucia and in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Students receive their learning materials through a variety of media including print materials, CD-ROMs, specifically designed Web sites and teleconferencing. Instructors and students "meet" through scheduled chat room sessions; students from different islands, or across the same island, teleconference. Local facilitators provide in-country support and much-needed human interface. All three of the programmes include a period of study at the Canadian campus.

Gleaned from feedback, students like the idea of completing a foreign degree without leaving home or their jobs. Instead of the traditional correspondence course time lag, online learning is immediate; information is quickly applied to the workplace. One difficulty is expensive Internet access on some of the islands, which limits online participation and its overall effectiveness. In some cases, more consistent contact with local facilitators is needed for follow up. In the case of the larger islands, more than one facilitator may be required, as the students are scattered across a broad geographical area.

COL continues the dialogue between students and contributing bodies to fix glitches. Non-participating island governments have expressed interest in the CCDESP; recent informal discussions with DFAIT include a possible continuation of the programme — and perhaps expansion. Most importantly, student response is positive. Ms. Aurea Anthony, a St. Lucia scholarship student, sums it up: "The opportunity given is well received, and we will get through the hurdles in due course."

Students like the idea of completing a foreign degree without leaving home or their jobs.

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Advocating the use of distance and open learning

COL is an active advocate and educator on the potential of distance education and open learning, as well as of technology in education. Through presentations and consultations with educators, development organisations and governments, COL helps bring distance education to the fore of the education and training agenda. Many of the presentations and speeches by staff and board members are available through COL's web site (*www.col.org/speeches*).

Following Nigeria's return to full membership status in the Commonwealth in 1999, COL's Chairman and President visited that country to meet with the Minister of Education and educational officials. They discussed how COL can be of service in advancing distance and open learning and in fostering regional co-operation, and also how the Commonwealth can benefit from Nigerian experience and expertise. At the invitation of the new Nigerian Government, COL was represented at a Donor Agencies Co-ordination Meeting held in Abuja in April 2000. Open and distance education figured prominently on the agenda. COL signalled that, whereas it could not be considered a major financial donor, it could be a significant contributor of ideas, knowledge and expertise.

COL is a member of the Global Knowledge Partnership and contributed to the success of the *Global Knowledge II* conference in Kuala Lumpur in March 2000. COL staff members are frequently invited to make presentations and to contribute to discussions at international forums.

In March 1999, in celebration of its tenth anniversary and in co-operation with the Government of Brunei Darussalam, COL held the first *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning*. The forum, and the pre-forum virtual conferences, brought together those interested in and able to contribute to the growth of open and distance learning in the Commonwealth – about 800 in total, with 400 physically in Brunei. While the theme of the forum was ***Empowerment through Knowledge and Technology***, the need to enhance practitioner empowerment through staff development was repeatedly identified by delegates. With support from several agencies, participation by delegates from almost all 54 Commonwealth countries was ensured. COL also conferred its first *Excellence in Distance Education Programme* awards at the Brunei meeting.

The second *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning* will be held in Durban in July 2002, in collaboration with the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa and the South African Department of Education.

Collaborative course offerings

The Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) is a new dimension to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade funded COL, as its executing agency, for this innovative five-year pilot programme. The CCDESP provides undergraduate scholarships for Caribbean students to study "at a distance" through Canadian post-secondary institutions and through using new information and communications technology. Scholarships are provided for Caribbean citizens for study in vocational areas where there are skills shortages.

With the assistance of The University of the West Indies, three Canadian Universities are delivering the programme in four countries. Alberta's Athabasca University is providing information technology programmes in Jamaica, Memorial University of Newfoundland is developing teacher education in Dominica and in St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia is offering tourism management in St. Lucia and in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

An external evaluation has recommended that COL's Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme programme be continued. The Fellowships were initially awarded in 1996, enabling students from 15 Commonwealth developing countries to follow a Master of Distance Education programme offered through India's Indira Gandhi National Open University. Sixty of the original 100 enrolees graduated in 1998. COL is supporting the revision and update of course materials and plans to support a second presentation starting in 2001, which will likely involve more Commonwealth institutions.

The joint COL/Commonwealth Secretariat Distance Training Programme for Legislative Drafters issued its first completion certificates in 1998 to legislative drafters in Cyprus, Falkland Islands, India, Malaysia and Singapore. It has now been delivered to trainees in up to 20 jurisdictions, including several in the Pacific and in Southeast Asia. The programme is also being offered by the University of the South Pacific and Vista University in South Africa, and has been sold for use outside of the Commonwealth. It was developed in response to a request from Commonwealth Law Ministers in 1992. The resulting course's significance was recognised at the 1999 meeting of Commonwealth Law Ministers and their Attorneys General.

continued...

Agriculture goes high tech with digital video

IT ISN'T JUST ANOTHER DAY in the cacao plantations of the Ashanti region in Ghana. The women – and many of the small-crop farmers in this African country are women – are out in the fields, but one of them has a video camera. Absorbed, her eye to the lens, her task is just as vital to farming as the other women's.

She's an extension officer, a field operative of the country's agricultural regional offices. She gives timely, region-specific support to farmers through in-person seminars, and to a limited extent through other media like print or radio. Chronic understaffing of extension offices doesn't make the job easy. Enter The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and its Commonwealth of Learning Media Empowerment (COLME) programme, with a pilot project that uses digital technology to produce farm instructional videos.

COLME finds technology-based solutions to needs in the Commonwealth community, in collaboration with in-country agencies. Based on a COLME model, the project trains agricultural extension officers in Ghana and Jamaica to shoot and edit videos that address regional concerns. The tapes then make the rounds with the extension officers, or are broadcast nationally.

The non-linear "DV" editing suite in use is a computer about the size of an average video player. The digital camera footage is shot and then brought into the editing programme using video and audio capturing technology. The unit plugs into a television set; all editing is done on-screen. The broadcast-quality product is transferred to videotape, and can be converted to any television format. In both countries, the focus was to initially train a core group in editing and shooting techniques.

The project began in Jamaica in collaboration with the government-supervised Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), in June 1999, as a strategy for small farmers to increase competitiveness. Jamaica's hilly terrain tends to block radio signals; video was the option of choice because of the high availability of television sets and video players. Video production is at existing national broadcast facilities in Kingston, where one person was initially trained. Another facility is slated for Montego Bay. Despite the need to accommodate to the requirements of Jamaica's extension system, videos are produced fairly regularly and another four officers are in training.

Begun in November 1999 with five women, Ghana's video project is run through the Women in Food and Agricultural Development (WIFAD) unit, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture's (MOFA) extension service. High farmer illiteracy and the lack of broadcasts catering to women farmers, in spite of the traditional predominance of women in food production, prompted the COL initiative. Video production is in an area just north of Accra in the town of Koforidua. Several timely local-content videos have been produced, although some technical aspects of video production continue to pose challenges.

Project feedback is planned from farmers as well as from the extension officers. The project was highlighted at the Caribbean *TEL-isphere 99* conference on technology-based education last fall, and Grenada, Tobago and the Commonwealth of Dominica have expressed interest. Soon, the video camera-wielding extension officer may become a regular feature of the Caribbean farming landscape.

Soon, the video camera-wielding extension officer may become a regular feature of the Caribbean farming landscape.

17

A Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/ Master of Public Administration programme is being developed and piloted by a COL-led consortium of open universities in South Asia. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) provided some funding assistance.

COL developed, and is administering, a print-based, self-learning, professional written communications skills development course under contract with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The course is for UNHCR staff at the organisation's Geneva headquarters and its regional offices worldwide.

Alliances and partnerships

In addition to its valued collaboration with governmental and non-governmental bodies in executing local projects, COL has formed co-operative arrangements with several international development agencies and organisations. They include:

- The Commonwealth Secretariat in management training, youth and health programmes, training of legislative drafters and technical/vocational programmes (training for laboratory technicians by distance education) as well as education;
- The World Bank in information sharing, teacher training and the Global Distance Education Net;
- The Economic Development Institute of the World Bank and Global Knowledge in building greater sensitivity to and use of knowledge systems, especially in developing economies;
- UNESCO in basic education, technical and vocational education (UNEVOC network), literacy and staff development;
- Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Groups on the teaching profession, higher education and distance education and open learning;
- Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa in developing distance training programmes for laboratory technicians;
- UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNDP to collaborate on the development of a gender training resources database;
- The Government of Brunei Darussalam in hosting the first *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning*;
- The Caribbean Broadcasting Union, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank's *Info*Dev programme, the British Department for International Development, the Barbados Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre and The Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions in presenting *TEL-isphere 99, The Caribbean and Technology Enhanced Learning*;
- The Caribbean Development Bank in a feasibility study on the use of public broadcasting as an effective means of addressing educational and training priorities in the Caribbean, as well as the *TEL-isphere 99* conference in Barbados;
- The Asian Development Bank in teacher training and distance education system building;
- WorldSpace Foundation in using satellite-based, digital radio for non-formal education;
- The International Literacy Institute (University of Pennsylvania) in developing literacy programmes; and
- Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC)'s Acacia Initiative in exploring barriers to accessing information and communications technologies for women in Africa.

Governance and management

At its September 1998 meeting COL's Board of Governors re-appointed Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C., as Chairman for a special third term, ending on 31 December 2002, and approved an extension of the term of office for its President and Chief Executive Officer, Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan. Brian Long joined COL in September 1998 as Director and was promoted to Vice President on 1 July 2000.

- Dr. Macdonald has had a distinguished career in academia and in government. He served the Canadian province of Ontario as Deputy Minister of Treasury, Economics, and Intergovernmental Affairs. Later he became President of York University, a position he held for more than ten years. He was then Director of York International for another ten years. He is now President Emeritus and Professor of Economics and Public Policy at York University and Director of York's Master of Public Administration Program. He has chaired COL's Board of Governors since January 1994.

CEMCA a success in educational media field

FOR A GOOD EXAMPLE of common wealth, picture an electronic library with more than 10,000 video and radio programmes in 10 languages, on 65 subjects, from 150 international organisations in six countries; then locate this library in developing Asia. The library is in an open learning university and is part of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). CEMCA is an educational resource organisation with a mission, and is also the regional arm of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

Almost as old as its parent organisation, CEMCA was conceived as a catalyst for the use of electronic media in distance education in Commonwealth Asia. Under the umbrella of COL's Commonwealth Educational Media Resources Programme (CEMREP), Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka presented educational media resource profiles to education experts at a 1993 meeting in Singapore. A decision to establish a regional database of educational media resources resulted in another meeting in Malaysia later that year, where a COL task force developed a firm outline for CEMCA.

Still needing a home for the facility, COL solicited proposals from major Asian education organisations; the Open University of Sri Lanka and India's Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) each had exemplary portfolios, but in the end, it was decided to accept IGNOU's offer. CEMCA was officially born at its host institution in 1994; in 1998 it came of age when an agreement between COL and the Indian government gave CEMCA the full rights and privileges of an international agency.

CEMCA's mandate is to provide consultancy and technical infrastructure for audio-visual production and programming, training in electronic media for education, and a locus for networking efforts. To form broad policy and to evaluate CEMCA's work, a director and a technical and administrative team networks with an advisory council of representatives from major regional open learning institutions.

Director since 1998, Dr. Usha Vyasulu Reddi has worked toward consolidating CEMCA's role as an educational video production centre. CEMCA is on the steering committee for India's new national education television channel, Gyan Darshan, and hopes to provide monthly programming for a one-hour slot within the next six months. In 1997, the organisation produced a documentary on the role of Indian women in agriculture for the international education television network WETV. CEMCA's networking-oriented newsletter *EduComm Asia* has been published since 1996; conceived as a quarterly, initial staff problems and high costs contributed to an erratic publishing schedule. During Reddi's tenure, the newsletter has come out thrice yearly. She hopes to make this quarterly by the next fiscal period.

Workshops on electronic media topics are also big on the agenda. CEMCA has conducted participant-paid workshops since 1996, often with regional organisations like the Commonwealth Information Technology Network (COMNET-IT), the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre, and the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. Topics include educational broadcast interview techniques, educational television scriptwriting and developing multi media courseware. The latest CEMCA offering is MEDLIB, a Windows-based software package for electronic media library management developed in collaboration with IGNOU's Electronic Media Production Centre and INFOTEL India.

Other regions of the Commonwealth have recognised the value of the CEMCA model for regional co-operation and are incorporating similar components into their programmes. Although CEMCA has no direct role, this is a clear endorsement. Imitation is, after all, flattery at its most sincere; among CEMCA's many achievements, perhaps the most crucial is in offering the Commonwealth a prototype of successful regional co-operation in sharing educational media resources.

- Professor Dhanarajan is internationally recognised for expertise in and advocacy for open and distance learning, as well as the application of appropriate educational technologies. Early in his career he helped develop distance education programmes at the University of Science Malaysia, and in other South Asian institutions. He joined the newly established Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong (now the Open University of Hong Kong) as Associate Director (Academic) in 1989, and served as Director from 1991 to 1995. He became President of COL in September 1995.
- Mr. Long held senior positions with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for over 25 years. He is now responsible for COL programme and staff management, resource allocation and COL's representation in the wider community.

COL has a small number of key professional staff employed on a full-time basis and a network of professional associates throughout the Commonwealth.

Gender equity goals, both in staffing and consultancy assignments, are observed in accordance with a standing *Policy on Equal Opportunities* developed by COL's Board of Governors.

Responding regionally

In partnership with institutions in the regions, distinguished associates have taken on roles as Regional Advisers to COL's President. In addition to regional information gathering, other possible roles include project monitoring, providing briefings or representations for COL and assisting with workshops, government consultations and other events. A COL staff member is assigned responsibility for each region, and works with the Adviser to ensure co-ordination of effort and the flow of information.

COL International

COL International enables The Commonwealth of Learning to offer its resources on a broader scale by marketing and executing fee-for-service consultative services to external agencies and institutions. It was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in 1999 and functions as an affiliate of COL.

Two-year seed funding was obtained to assist in the establishment and to ensure the sustainability of COL International's basic operations for 2000-2001.

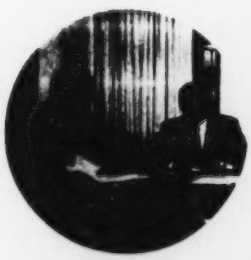
COL International offers clients a network of contacts, consultants, resources and knowledge generated through the direct management of hundreds of programmes worldwide. The range of services includes the creation and management of traditional education programmes in addition to open learning and distance education, community development and information-based communications systems, materials development, training of administrative and course development staff, and the application of appropriate technologies to such programmes.

In December 1999, COL International launched a World Bank/ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)-funded study on distance education for primary teacher training in Nigeria.

COL is grateful to Industry Canada for supporting this initiative by providing COL International's Executive Director / Chief Operating Officer on secondment to COL.

TRAINING SURGEONS

TEL-ISPHERE CONFERENCE



MOZAMBIQUE PROJECT

Literacy Project: speaking up for the written word

IN A CENTURY WHEN rapid change is commonplace, information overload is a reality; the pace of discovery has almost overtaken the ability of humanity to assimilate knowledge. At the cusp of the information millennium, it's tougher than ever to get through all the details without being able to read.

Literacy is essential in societies which rely on written information, although images and oral traditions can be effective. But in spite of intrinsic value, literacy remains a basic challenge for the Commonwealth's developing countries. Which is where The Commonwealth of Learning's Literacy Project (COLLIT) comes in.

With a grant from the British Department for International Development (DFID), COL began its three-year pilot project in India and Zambia in 1999. The goal is to kick start self-sustaining literacy programmes based in community learning centres, using information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as computers and televisions, in the curriculum of the country. The target group is adults and out-of-school youth in the workforce who have an immediate need for reading and writing skills. Actual programme design and implementation, as well as providing physical infrastructure, is the task of in-country partners: the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) of India and the University of Zambia.

COL helps partners design and acquire needs-specific learning materials, and assists in training literacy workers and tutors to staff the centres and conduct classes. Aside from the project manager, Dr. Glen Farrell, COL has engaged an instructional designer to help develop project course material.

In-person meetings between COL, in-country project directors and literacy education experts are held annually to report on progress, deal with difficulties and tweak the project time line. More frequent teleconferencing resolves housekeeping and just-in-time issues. Dr. Judith Calder, senior lecturer with the Open University in the United Kingdom, is the independent evaluator monitoring the project in consultation with all parties.

India's COLLIT Project began in July 1999. Based on existing Hindi literacy programmes, material will be reworked to incorporate ICT use in consultation with the instructional designer. The State Resource Centres of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are working with IGNOU and each Centre will operate two community learning centres. Content will include computer literacy training and programmes on the local culture and economy.

The COLLIT Project in Zambia supplements the print-based Zambia Literacy Programme. Content is agriculture-based; English material has been translated into one of three local languages being used in four centres. Two are in Kabwe in the Central Province and one each in Katete, in the Eastern Province, and in Monze, in the Southern Province. Web-based courses are already available, and other ICT uses, such as digital cameras for capturing graphics, are being explored.

Project manager Glen Farrell's take on the project? "I would have preferred for us to be further along, but introducing innovation takes time," he says. There is red tape to untangle, centres to be equipped; training of centre support staff, especially in ICT use, is still underway. But the will is there, and in pushing for literacy, the COLLIT Project is getting through the details.

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Support *from* Governments

Leaders see COL as "ideal instrument" to meet their needs

COL's vision was endorsed at the 1999 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). CHOGM's Committee of the Whole noted that COL is an "ideal instrument" to meet their needs and encouraged Commonwealth Ministers of Education to make pledges sufficient to provide COL with a minimum of CDN$9 million annually to carry out its *Three-year Plan for 2000 – 2003*:

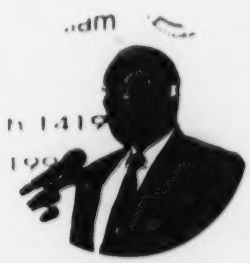
> *The Committee received with satisfaction the Report of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and noted COL's success in fulfilling the objectives set out in its Three-year Plan, 1997-2000, approved by Ministers of Education at their meeting in Botswana and endorsed by Heads of Government during their Meeting in Edinburgh. The Committee appreciated that COL constitutes an ideal instrument through which the Commonwealth can extend access to education and training to meet its human resource development needs and to prepare Commonwealth citizens for the challenges of a global knowledge-based society. It encouraged COL to form partnerships as appropriate to enhance its capacity to pursue the full breadth of the goals and mission envisaged for COL in the Board's Report.*
>
> *The Committee endorsed the direction sketched out for the next Three-year Plan, 2000-2003, given the critical importance of education and training to every aspect of human, social and economic development, as well as the opportunities presented by the new information and communication technologies. The Committee encouraged Commonwealth Ministers of Education to make pledges sufficient to provide COL with a minimum of $9 million annually to carry out this Plan.*

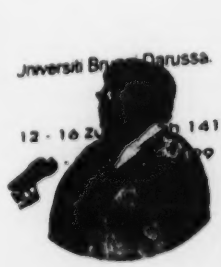
In their final Communiqué, Commonwealth Heads of Government also recognised the contribution that COL is making on their behalf:

> *Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to education and training as essential foundations of human development and emphasised their central importance in equipping people with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of development and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalisation. They recognised the contribution of the Commonwealth of Learning in supporting the efforts of Commonwealth developing countries to benefit fully from the new information and communication technologies in developing their human potential through distance education.*

Funding

As the financial statements on the following pages show, Commonwealth governments have recognised COL as a results-oriented agency worthy of continued support. During the past three years, 35 countries made untied cash contributions; they, as well as others, also provided various in-kind contributions. Many development agencies supported COL on specific projects and revenue has also been derived from fee-for-service contracts. Overall, COL's core funding is leveraged to the extent that at least two dollars of programming is generated for each dollar of programme expenditure.





PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING, BRUNEI 1999

Support *for* Governments and citizens of the Commonwealth

World leaders recognise that all citizens must have access to education and training if they are to be equipped to shape their own destiny, and to meet the social, economic, and personal challenges of the global knowledge-based economy. To achieve this objective, governments have also recognised the need to look beyond the conventional model for providing education. In doing so, they seek to draw on the opportunities afforded by distance and open learning, which in turn must capitalise on the potential offered by information and communications technologies (ICTs).

These instruments can economically extend access to quality education, even to the remotest regions. They also provide flexible learning options to address formal educational needs, as well as expanding needs for non-formal education in literacy, numeracy, public health and hygiene, labour-market training, lifelong learning and special human challenges such as refugee education, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, orphans and street children.

COL is located at the point of convergence between the demands of a global knowledge-based economy, the pertinence of open and distance learning, and the opportunities afforded by ICTs. It has the experience and knowledge to provide valuable services for member governments; it is in-touch with their needs, and can respond quickly.

Education and training must be designed to serve multiple purposes, from up-skilling illiterate or semi-literate agricultural workers facing the implications of biotechnology, to upgrading health professionals who confront parallel developments in medical technologies. The Commonwealth employs COL to address these needs, and with them questions of equity, access, quality, the costing of education and the appropriateness of delivery mechanisms.

Future directions

Encouraged by the support of member governments and by the growing application of distance and open learning in the technologically rich environment of the new decade, COL is presenting to Commonwealth Education Ministers, in November 2000 a new and modestly ambitious plan for the next three years (2000 – 2003). The Plan refines the agency's focus, positioning COL to better exploit the knowledge era's assets and add further value to the Commonwealth's aspirations to develop its human capital.

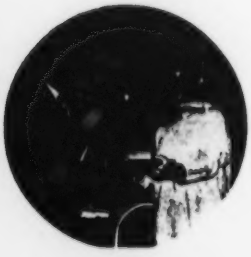
The Plan's strategic focus is on four core roles for COL:

- as a catalyst for collaborative action
- as a resource for training
- as a capacity builder
- as an information and knowledge provider

Each of these builds on COL's work over the last ten years; each also responds to new global challenges. Planned initiatives over the next three years will help COL determine how it can develop into an even greater Commonwealth asset for the decades ahead.

As in the past, this Three-year Plan was developed through Commonwealth-wide consultation over a period of 18 months. Government ministries, non-government organisations, educational institutions and individuals have all contributed.

With the increased financial resources called for in the Plan, along with the ongoing collaboration of COL's numerous governmental and non-governmental partners, COL is confident that it can deliver on all aspects of the Plan in the service of the Commonwealth.



EXCELLENCE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION AWARDS, BRUNEI 1999

Publications
(July 1998 – 2000)

Communications documents

NEWSLETTERS

Connections (October 1998, January 1999, May 1999, October 1999, February 2000, June 2000)

EdTech News (October 1998, January 1999, October 1999, February 2000)

Excellence in Distance Education Programme Awards (May 1999)

EDUCOM-ASIA (Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, July 1998, January 1999 and May 1999, October 1999, February 2000)

KNOWLEDGE SERIES

Editing distance education materials

Support groups in distance education

Instructional design for self-learning for distance education

The use of multi media in distance education

Managing for electronic networking

DETAILED REPORTING

Summary Report 1998–2000

REPORTS TO GOVERNMENTS

Three-year Plan, 2000–2003 – and report to Commonwealth Education Ministers (November 2000)

Report to the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (April 2000)

Report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (November 1999)

ELECTRONIC

World Wide Web information service on the Internet at: *www.col.org*

CD-ROM: *Ten Years of The Commonwealth of Learning – A celebration of achievement* (1999)

VIDEO: *Ten Years of The Commonwealth of Learning – A celebration of achievement* (1999)

Research documents and consultancies

Training and Professional Development of Distance Educators: A resource book of articles (1998)

Inventory and report on teacher education materials and programmes in the Commonwealth Caribbean (1998)

Technical and vocational teacher training core curriculum (2nd edition, 1998)

Higher Education through Open and Distance Learning. COL/Routledge (1999)

The Development of Virtual Education: A global perspective (1999, with funding from the British Department for International Development)

Knowledge Management Roundtable, report and proposals for action (Consultancy report, 1999, Keith Harry, facilitator)

The Facilitation of the Transfer of Learning Materials (1999)

The use of Public Broadcasting in the Caribbean for Open/Distance Learning: Feasibility study report (Consultancy report, 2000, Betty Mitchell and Krishnapillai Murugan, with funding from the Caribbean Development Bank)

Basic Education at a Distance. COL/Routledge (2000)

Training toolkits

An Overview of Open and Distance Learning

*Planning & Management of Open and Distance Learning**

*Designing Materials for Open and Distance Learning**

*Use and Integration of Media in Open and Distance Learning**

Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning

Learner Support in Open and Distance Learning

Copyright & Distance Education

*published with funding from the Asian Development Bank

Papers and presentations

Keynote and case study presentations:

Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, Brunei Darussalam

The Commonwealth of Learning, March 1999
on-line at: *www.col.org/forum*

Keynote and case study presentations:

TEL-isphere '99 - The Caribbean & Technology-Enhanced Learning

The Commonwealth of Learning, November 1999
on-line at: *www.col.org/tel99*

Education for All – The mass media formula. Gajaraj Dhanarajan and David Walker, presented at the International Consultative Forum on Education for All ("EFA Forum"), Dakar, April 2000

Improving systems providing education and training throughout life. John Bartram, presented at UNESCO's Second World Congress for Technical and Vocational Education, Seoul, April 1999

Presentation to Ministers and Heads of Delegation at the *UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education*. Patrick Guiton, Paris, October 1998

Other speeches and papers: *www.col.org/speeches*

project profile

Legislative drafting course goes the distance

LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING can be accompanied by much gnashing of teeth. Ask any number of hapless government legislative staff. Constructing a legally sound, coherent legislative document is not as simple as it seems; in addition to good writing and compositional skills, the drafter must have an understanding of the legislative process and of the impact and effectiveness of legislation. These skills are not often taught in law school or learned in law practice. A well-constructed, well-written draft can ease the passage of proposed legislation through parliament and facilitate its faithful interpretation by courts. Skilled legislative drafting contributes to that elusive, desirable combination of peace and good government.

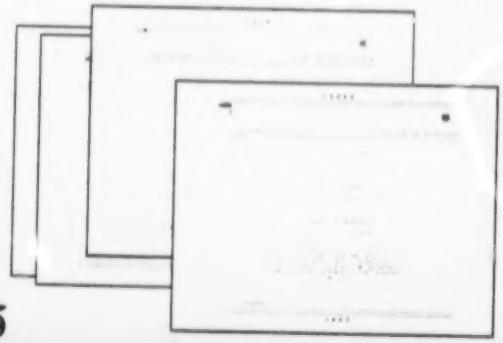
Drafting abilities certainly come with experience. However, in many parts of the Commonwealth the only drafting training junior staff get is of the impromptu variety at the office, with widely varying levels of senior support. Providing full time, formal training had a hefty overseas education price tag many governments are increasingly unwilling or unable to afford. A distance education course on the side while staff keep their day jobs up, and consequently costs to the government down, is a likely cost-effective alternative. Recognising this, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) began developing a distance-training programme for legislative drafters in 1992, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division (ComSec).

The curriculum for the COL/ComSec legislative drafting programme was put together by an international project advisory group of expert trainers and is based on Commonwealth legal practice. Course design and development was jointly funded by COL and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC). Authoring was provided by Professor Keith Patchett, a legislative drafter and trainer from the Royal Institute for Public Administration (RIPA) in London, with instructional design provided by TDA Consulting Group Ltd. of Kew, England. The guided independent study course uses print materials and audio tapes, in some cases supplemented by local mentor support, and is designed for adaptability to individual jurisdictions. It serves both as an introduction to drafting as well as an upgrade for practicing professionals. A field test with a group of trainee drafters in Barbados further refined the course; a six-module version was approved in 1993, and a revised edition for 2000 has just been issued.

The programme's goal is course delivery through regional institutions, with updates and upgrades covered by COL's licensing fees. A pilot programme, which ran from 1996 to 1998 with an enrolment of thirty, was contracted for delivery by RIPA (International) in London. Graduates included legal staff from the governments of Cyprus, Falkland Islands, India, Malaysia and Singapore. The University of the South Pacific licensed the course in 1998 for its Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting. In 1999, South Africa's Vista University licensed the course material for a graduate legislative drafting certificate.

Recent licensees include the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, Australia and the Institute of International Legal Research at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, the latter for limited use of the materials. Licensing negotiations are underway with institutions in Canada and Papua New Guinea.

If *caveat emptor* is the order of the day, the success of any enterprise speaks for itself: the programme's enrolment figures are steady, and graduates have included a high court registrar, a police commissioner and a Member of Parliament. As for cost effectiveness? Ringing in at about half the estimated UK£7,000 cost of full time overseas training, the COL/ComSec legislative drafting programme is living up to its promise.



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Summary Financial Information

Years ending 30 June 1999 and 2000
(Canadian $)

Balance Sheet

	AS AT 30 JUNE	
	2000	1999
Assets		
Current	$ 5,644,150	$ 5,490,970
Non-Current	446,863	209,751
	$ 6,091,013	$ 5,700,721
Liabilities		
Current	$ 539,221	$ 508,189
Net Assets	5,551,792	5,192,532
	$ 6,091,013	$ 5,700,721

Statement of Changes in Net Assets

For the Year Ended 30 June 2000

Net Assets	Invested in capital assets	Restricted for special projects	Unrestricted	Total
Balance, beginning of year	$ 201,917	$ 2,080,264	$ 2,910,351	$ 5,192,532
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenditures	(80,976)	(232,997)	673,233	359,260
Investment in capital assets	88,971	-	(88,971)	-
Balance, end of year	$ 209,912	$ 1,847,267	$ 3,494,613	$ 5,551,792

Statements of Revenues and Expenditures

	YEARS ENDED 30 JUNE	
	2000	1999
Revenues		
Member Governments	$ 4,392,296	$ 4,466,815
Special Projects	617,358	501,557
Contractual	587,781	74,976
Other	735,910	546,720
	6,333,345	5,590,068
Expenditures		
Programmes and projects	3,428,725	3,392,649
Special projects	1,001,310	244,816
Contractual services	368,201	60,759
Organisational management	561,059	568,638
Governance	268,795	226,277
Other	345,995	170,157
	5,974,085	4,663,296
Revenues in Excess of Expenditures	$ 359,260	$ 926,772

Schedule of Funding from Member Governments

YEARS ENDED 30 JUNE	2000	1999
Antigua & Barbuda	$ -	$ -
Australia	371,577	371,890
The Bahamas	36,772	37,075
Bangladesh	-	-
Barbados	-	18,658
Belize	-	-
Botswana	11,028	-
Brunei Darussalam	-	-
Cameroon	-	-
Canada		-
Canadian International Development Agency	1,100,000	1,100,000
Province of British Columbia	1,000,000	1,000,000
Cyprus	4,206	4,636
Dominica	11,685	24,053
Fiji	-	-
The Gambia	-	-
Ghana	-	-
Grenada	-	-
Guyana	11,899	14,546
India	410,949	419,403
Jamaica	13,013	14,602
Kenya	-	-
Kiribati	-	-
Lesotho	43,803	-
Malawi	-	-
Malaysia	-	69,370
Maldives	7,461	7,711
Malta	20,000	18,599
Mauritius	50,000	50,000
Mozambique	-	10,000
Namibia	36,673	38,625
Nauru	-	-
New Zealand	231,000	212,795
Nigeria	-	-
Pakistan	-	-
Papua New Guinea	-	-
St. Kitts & Nevis	11,818	-
St. Lucia	-	-
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	-	5,000
Samoa	37,388	38,033
Seychelles	14,923	-
Sierra Leone	-	-
Singapore	-	-
Solomon Islands	-	-
South Africa	43,190	71,570
Sri Lanka	14,112	-
Swaziland	-	26,762
Tanzania	-	-
Tonga	-	13,860
Trinidad & Tobago	53,824	54,315
Tuvalu	-	-
Uganda	-	-
United Kingdom	856,975	845,312
Vanuatu	-	-
Zambia	-	-
Zimbabwe	-	-
[redacted]	$ 4,392,296	$ 4,466,815

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